

# [FCC's Lifeline Proposal Would Bring Affordable Broadband Internet to Low-Income Households](#)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 8, 2016 || **Contacts:** Jan Kruse, [jkruse@nclc.org](mailto:jkruse@nclc.org), 617-542-8010 or Olivia Wein, [owein@nclc.org](mailto:owein@nclc.org) or 202-452-6252

**(WASHINGTON)** Today, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner Clyburn have [announced](#) a Lifeline [proposal](#) for consideration by the Commission at its March 31, 2016 meeting. The proposal provides a thoughtful framework for modernizing the federal low-income telecommunications discount program to include affordable broadband Internet service. "Access to the Internet is a necessity, not a luxury, and low-income households need affordable, quality 21st century communications," said National Consumer Law Center attorney Olivia Wein.

The Lifeline program was established in the mid-1980s to connect low-income households to emergency services, jobs, healthcare, teachers, friends, and family through affordable voice phone service. The current Lifeline support is \$9.25 a month. The FCC's proposal would allow Lifeline participants to direct their Lifeline discount toward affordable broadband service.

Access to broadband today is as essential for access to opportunity as electricity was in the last century. For those who can afford broadband service, broadband integration in modern life has been nearly ubiquitous and Internet access has [transformed the classroom](#). As FCC Commissioner Rosenworcel has noted, the "homework gap" is the cruelest part of the digital divide. From access to jobs and healthcare, the harmful effects of digital exclusion increase, especially as more necessities of modern life move online.

"We thank FCC Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner Clyburn for their leadership in modernizing the Lifeline program and Commissioner Rosenworcel for elevating the need to close the "homework gap" for our nation's children," said Wein.

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Since 1969, the nonprofit National Consumer Law Center® (NCLC®) has used its expertise in consumer law and energy policy to work for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the United States. NCLC's expertise includes policy analysis and advocacy; consumer law and energy publications; litigation; expert witness services, and training and advice for advocates. NCLC works with nonprofit and legal services organizations, private attorneys, policymakers, and federal and state government and courts across the nation to stop exploitative practices, help financially stressed families build and retain wealth, and advance economic fairness. [www.nclc.org](http://www.nclc.org)